


# Communicating information

**Making the headlines**

▲ Below is a news story which needs to be redrafted so that it is appropriate for your newspaper's readers. Think carefully about your audience before rewriting this on paper or typing it into the computer for redrafting.

A light aircraft made a forced landing onto a motorway. Traffic swerved to avoid the plane. The plane landed in the direction of the traffic flow. There were two people on board the plane. The plane had flown into a flock of Canada geese and one of them had hit the propeller, breaking it. The plane stopped and pulled into the hard shoulder of the motorway. The pilot's name was Jim Fraser and it was the second time he has made a forced landing. The plane had to be taken apart to get it off the motorway. There was a 24 mile traffic queue while the plane was removed. The passenger in the plane was Mr Fraser's twelve-year-old daughter Catherine. Catherine said it was a great adventure and she wouldn't have missed it for the world.



## Reference to photocopiable sheet

Photocopiable page 129 displays a short 'typical' news story which the children have to redraft in a style appropriate for a particular audience. It can be used as an onscreen exercise, or as a pen and paper exercise to introduce the IT task above.

## PEN PORTRAITS

**To use word processing software to communicate in writing with others, perhaps including transmission by e-mail (optional).**

†† Individuals or pairs.

🕒 20 minutes at computer; 10 minutes discussion.

## Previous skills/knowledge needed

Children should be confident in using word processing software.

## Key background information

Children often find writing about themselves easier than writing about other subjects. The aim of this activity is for them to use IT to communicate, perhaps through e-mail, with an unknown person and to include as many interesting facts about themselves as possible.

E-mail is the communication medium of the future, being fast, cheap and direct. Schools all over the world are able to communicate easily through this medium with excellent curriculum benefits. Although access to e-mail is not essential for this activity, it opens up many possibilities if your school has an Internet link. Children are able to exchange information about what they do at school, what

they eat for lunch, games they play, stories they enjoy, descriptions of local places of interest – the list is endless. Often, pupils will pair up and find a special friend to correspond with. At some point, children will want to exchange descriptions of themselves to make the process more personal, and this activity will help them to produce these.

If e-mail facilities are not available, you can use these personal descriptions with the whole class or groups, perhaps playing a guessing game to find out which child each description applies to.

## Vocabulary

E-mail, electronic mail, modem, on-line, log on, Internet, Internet provider, World Wide Web.

## Preparation

If you have an e-mail facility, set up a suitable link, such as with another school in a different part of the country or overseas, to enable the children to transmit their descriptions to.

## Resources

Computer, printer, paper, e-mail facility (optional).

## What to do

Even without an e-mail context, writing personal descriptions or 'pen portraits' is a useful exercise for the children, offering opportunities to appreciate similarities and differences between people in a positive way. Start by discussing with the children what kind of information would



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be useful and interesting for a distant pen pal or someone who did not know them. Then allow them access to the computer in pairs, or individually, to enter their descriptions.

Encourage the children to print out their finished descriptions and perhaps to draw illustrations of themselves to accompany their work. If an e-mail contact is possible, several personal descriptions may be sent out to a distant contact. Hopefully, this will produce individual replies enabling the children to match up with a distant pen pal. If an e-mail facility is not available, the children could play a game where they choose a description at random (cover up or omit the name first!) and see whether they can recognise the child it relates to.

## Suggestion(s) for extension

This task could also provide an information handling exercise. The children could create a class database in which they group themselves according to their various attributes. As well as self-written portraits, the children could write portraits about their friends. This would produce some interesting results – which were the most accurate and why? Alternatively, the children could reduce their descriptions to a shorter length or produce a description which consists of their own ideas, plus those suggested by a friend.

## Suggestion(s) for support

For less confident children, provide a list of specific characteristics for them to describe. Focusing on physical characteristics such as hair and eye colour, shoe size and so on, will help them.

## Assessment opportunities

The activity provides opportunities to assess the children's IT capability in communicating information, and in their

ability to compose and redraft using word processing software. Similarly, in English there are opportunities to assess organisation, imagination and clarity within their personal descriptions. Assessment of grammatical construction, punctuation and spelling are also possible.

## Display ideas

The children's descriptions can be used to create an interesting display. Adding old or current photographs of the children, and drawings which they have created using a variety of media, can add to the appeal. Such a display offers good opportunities to raise the children's self-esteem and to discuss cultural similarities and differences.

## OUR SCHOOL

**To design and format text for a wider audience. To provide opportunities for using the graphic frame facility within a desktop publishing program.**

†† Whole class working in pairs.

⌚ 40 minutes at the computer; 20 minutes discussion.

## Previous skills/knowledge needed

Children must be confident in using a word processing or DTP application. They should also have looked in detail at the existing school prospectus.

## Key background information

In the world of marketing and selling, quality presentation is increasingly important. High standards of communication, efficiency in telling people what they want to know, and making access to this information as enjoyable as possible is all part of the marketing process. Competition is a driving

